



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

AMERICA AND FRANCE.

BY GASTON DESCHAMPS.

I.

ON the 27th of March, 1777, a swift and beautiful vessel called "La Victoire," commanded by Captain Le Boursier, sailed southward from the harbor of Bordeaux. After stopping near Saint Sebastian, in the little port of Pasajes, "La Victoire" reached South Inlet, in South Carolina, on Friday, June 13th, 1777.

Among the passengers of "La Victoire" was a gentleman nineteen years old, Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de La Fayette. These are the words in which Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane announced, to Congress, the approaching arrival of the young traveller:

"The Marquis de La Fayette, a young gentleman of distinguished family connections and large fortune, has started for America, accompanied by some officers of distinction, with the intention of serving in our army. He is greatly beloved, and the good wishes of every one follow him. We can only hope that he will meet with a reception calculated to make the country and his undertaking agreeable to him. We shall be fortunate if the respect and attention shown him are of use in our affairs here, in giving pleasure, not only to his powerful relations and to the court, but to the whole French nation. He leaves behind him a pretty young wife, and for her sake, especially, we hope that his bravery and his ardent desire to distinguish himself may be somewhat restrained by the wisdom of the general, to the extent, at least, of not allowing him to incur danger when the occasion does not exact it."

Nothing could be more kindly, more solicitous than this letter. America adopted as a son this young hero, who put at the service of liberty a virgin and resplendent sword.

Twenty months after this glorious landing, La Fayette returned to France for a season, upon a ship called "L'Alliance," and succeeded in persuading the French government to despatch

the auxiliary force which, under the command of Count Rochambeau, reached America in the summer of 1780.

"La Victoire," "L'Alliance"! These two symbolic words haunted my imagination as the steamer "L'Aquitaine" was bearing me over the surges of the Atlantic, toward the hospitable shores of the United States. I had re-copied in my notebook this beautiful letter of La Fayette to the illustrious Washington:

"Farewell, my dear General; I hope that your French friend will always be dear to you. I trust that I shall see you again shortly that I may tell you in person with what emotion I leave, for the present, the country where you dwell, and with what affection, with what veneration, I shall always be your respectful and sincere friend."

While I sojourned in the immense territory of the Union, among the populous towns of Massachusetts and Connecticut, on the verdant heights of California, in the midst of the pasture lands of Texas or the plains of Arizona, under the perfumed magnolias of Louisiana, I thought of the tradition, already more than a hundred years old, which unites the French and the Americans.

This tradition must not be menaced; it must be defended against the machinations of those who have, apparently, an interest in setting it aside.

To maintain this treaty of alliance, concluded in the smoke of battle, it is enough that France and America should learn to know each other better.

II.

Despite all the books which French travellers have written about America, Americans are but little understood by Parisians. We think of them too much as resembling those noisy individuals who find a certain grotesque pleasure in throwing a shower of gold around the restaurants of the boulevards, and a shower of dust in the eyes of the loungers. The papers are full of the doings of some "high roller" or other, who, by his foolish extravagance, dazed the waiters in the Hotel Ritz, the Grand Hotel, or the Hotel Continental; and the derisive public regards, with a slightly distrustful irony, these florid accounts of wealth and the pranks of these millionaires.

"What?" the good Parisian *bourgeois*, accustomed to observe and to criticise, says to himself. "What? Is this the great people who, we are told, are so industrious, so grave, so earnest?" And

little by little he is confirmed in the opinion, assuredly false, according to which Americans were created and put into the world for just two purposes—to make dollars and to spend them in folly. We may well say: “Undeceive yourself, good Parisian *bourgeois*. Do not trust only to the evidence of your own eyes and ears.” The Parisian *bourgeois* replies: “I know what I see, and I remember what I hear,” and the Parisian *bourgeois* is as obstinate as a mule. When he has once acquired an idea, nothing will make him give it up.

This mischievous prejudice is to be attributed, in great measure, to the Americans who come to Paris. They deliver themselves, bound hand and foot, to the hotel waiters and the cabmen who, naturally, in Paris as in all possible or imaginable capitals, show them only the most trivial things, such as the second-rate theatres and the café concerts.

There are, of course, notable exceptions; for instance, my good friend Mr. R—— of Philadelphia, who follows an intelligently prepared programme in his French travels, and who will retain ineffaceable recollections of them.

In Paris, instead of visiting the pot-houses of Montmartre or exploring the sewers, Mr. R—— goes to the Institute, to the College of France, to the Sorbonne. He sees our savants, our writers, the men of brains and of heart who are truly representative of our nation. I am sure that, returning to Philadelphia, Mr. R—— can give account of the virtues and the traits which commend to universal esteem a country where Victor Hugo has left brilliant disciples, where Pasteur survives in the brilliant group of the *Pasteuriens*, where Rostand makes the sonorous French alexandrine resound triumphantly, where philological science can count among its adepts a Gaston Paris and a Michel Bréal, where the science of Lavoisier and de Fourcroy has been added to by the discoveries of Berthelot.

These are the things to be seen in Paris, and not the capers of this or that buffoon, famous in the two worlds, yet of whose very names most intelligent Parisians are ignorant.

American literature, already so rich, is lacking in good and comprehensive books about France and the French. This is a department of literature which should be attractive to the youthful talent with which the universities in America are teeming. Each year a certain number of young Americans cross the

Atlantic, perhaps to study at the College of France, perhaps to learn, in our national *École des Beaux-Arts*, the principles of the arts of design, notably of that charmingly pastoral architecture which directs the construction of the cottages in which the workers of the United States rest after the labors of the day. I wish that one of these young men might take up his pen with the object of offering to his compatriots an exact and complete picture of contemporary France.

If Americans were better informed as to French affairs, one would not be met, on first touching the soil of the New World, with the question, always the same:

“Do you often go to the *Moulin-Rouge*?”

The *Moulin-Rouge*, my dear friends, is a place where one encounters only provincials and foreigners. Parisians do not go there. Many excellent men in Paris do not even know where it is. Cease, then, once for all, to consider Montmartre the Acropolis of Paris. On our side, we long with all our hearts to know the truth about America.

III.

The truth is that the Americans are not mere money-makers, as they have been represented to us by recent books, solely occupied in amassing dollars. Certainly, they have a great deal of money, and I congratulate them. They proclaim, on all occasions, with a praiseworthy frankness, that money is, for the industrious, the surest means of making modern civilization, with its great and delightful advantages, flourish upon the earth. They understand the judicious use of money.

To begin with, the American women—who, I may say without flattery, are marvels of good-humor, of good health, and often of exquisite beauty—like fairies with a magic wand, transform money into an exquisite ornamentation of domestic life, by which the art of furnishing, aided by the enchanting illumination of electric chandeliers, metamorphoses the house into a habitation of happiness, which delights the eye and fills the heart with repose. The American home, arranged and decorated by feminine hands, is altogether delightful. It is good to live in it.

This is not all. I have remarked that everywhere America is a country of small houses and of huge buildings. Side by side with the pretty dwellings, in which furnaces keep up in the raw

months of winter the temperature of spring, I have been amazed at the enormous structures whose multiplied stories are constantly linked together by the coming and going of the elevators. But what most astonished me, in my recent journey, were the magnificent universities which rise from the soil of the United States.

I saw, in succession, Harvard University and Radcliffe College at Cambridge; Yale University at New Haven; Trinity College at Hartford; Williams College at Williamstown; Brown University at Providence; Wellesley College; Mount Holyoke College; Columbia University at New York; Vassar College at Poughkeepsie; Adelphi College and Packer Collegiate Institute at Brooklyn; the University of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia; Princeton University; Cornell University at Ithaca; Wells College at Aurora, New York; the University of Chicago; Purdue University at La Fayette, Indiana; the University of California at Berkeley; and Tulane University at New Orleans.

Everywhere I admired the generous instinct which has caused these temples of learning to rise from the earth. The Americans have understood that material force is as nothing without moral power. They have desired to be as great through the impalpable prestige of the intellect as through the terrestrial royalty of silver and gold. For this reason men and women have rivalled each other in zeal and liberality in endowing these universities, most of which are young, and all strong and already mature. What an enthusiasm of generosity! With one accord millions have been poured out to form the endowments which are destined to support these laboratories, these libraries, these gymnasia, all this scholastic equipment, which tends to assure at the same time the mental and physical development of the new America. What is more significant than the emulation of the richest men of Chicago in creating, out of many fragments, the University of Chicago, the republic of learning of which Doctor Harper is president? Nor is that an undertaking more generous than that of Mrs. Phoebe Hearst, in gathering, at her own expense, a vast international assembly, so that in flower-clad California a university city might arise, whose marbles would glorify the sovereignty of the human intellect. Thanks to these memorable endowments, gold, in America, has become a fluid and ductile medium interchangeable with science and art. Certainly idealism is making progress, and the power of money will be ennobled. The Americans, inven-

tive in everything, have made a new invention — the idealized dollar.

I am glad to see that in this enterprise of human culture the citizens of the United States are mindful of the ties which unite them to France, the dean of European nations.

The founders of the American universities, in forming the generous purpose of elevating the minds and hearts of their countrymen, have rendered homage to methods long since adopted by the French universities. In reading the courses of American institutions of higher learning, I see that a large space is reserved for the study of the literature of my own country. May one be permitted to wish that the list of authors drawn up by the professors and lecturers might be revised, and not limited to the most distinguished names only? While waiting for this indispensable amendment, I am pleased to see that the authorities of the American universities neglect no opportunity of manifesting their friendly feeling toward the French writers who visit the New World. The University of Chicago, in particular, through the combined efforts of President Harper and M. Mérou, the French consul at Chicago, concluded a treaty of friendship with the local section of *L'Alliance Française*. This event was celebrated by great festivities, at which M. Cambon, the French Minister to the United States, was present.

I am persuaded that the better France and America know each other, the better they will love each other.

GASTON DESCHAMPS.